



WHO ARE YOU?

A Success Process for
Building Your Life's Foundation

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Preface

Each of us is in truth an unlimited idea of freedom.

—Richard Bach

Freedom. “Freedom” is defined as the capacity to exercise choice, free will, and the ability to enjoy life’s privileges. In America, we talk about freedom and try to live it. But are we really free? We live in a world where we buy into the definitions of other people. We allow others to define us by our race, our gender, our background, our class, or by our environment. When we buy into these labels, we put ourselves and others in boxes that limit us. The result? One of many is never realizing our greatest potential. From the moment we get up in the morning to the time we go to bed, most of our day is spent doing the same routine. Seven days a week. If we did the same thing yesterday that we will do today and tomorrow, what have we really done? The answer is nothing. We’ve already done it and we get stuck in a comfort zone. Our days are filled with so many automatic activities that we never get a chance to think about why we’re doing it and who we are.

The educational system doesn’t always teach us how to think. We sit in a classroom. We read and study information. We get tested and are labeled by a grade. If I then ask you two weeks later what did you learn, you may say “I don’t know.” Unfortunately, so many of us can relate to the process of learning and forgetting. How then is it possible to grow or develop when the information is never connected to our heart and soul, then to our mind, then to the world we live in? The world says to us: You don’t know who you are so let me tell you.

This book, *Who Are You?*, does not solve all of your problems nor give you all the answers. It’s designed to get you to think. It’s designed to wake you up if you’re in that comfort zone. I hope it will help you to start the journey of improving yourself every day by learning to process. When I learn to process and think, I move from slave to owner of my own destiny. Regardless of how someone else defines me, I’m able to take control of knowing who I am and that’s a gift I give myself.

Introduction

We must become the change we seek.

—Gandhi

Everywhere you turn there are messages about success, as if there is one ultimate indicator or destination point everyone tries to reach. In truth, there are probably millions of definitions of success. They range from tangibles such as a big salary, house, fancy car, or corner office to intangibles such as happiness, freedom, good health, family, and some that are a little of both, such as education level or rank and title. Have you ever thought about what your definition of success is? Everybody has their own definition, whether they realize it or not. It could very well be different from what your definition was ten years ago or ten months ago, and it may change in the days to come, but take a moment to define success for yourself.

As you might have guessed, I've spent a lot of time considering my definition. In fact, I've spent my whole life focusing on helping individuals and organizations be successful, no matter their definition. Through books, educational seminars, and consulting, we help them arrive at their own definition through a step-by-step process based on their values and interests. We've worked with a wide range of people from teenagers to top executives to help them frame their lives for success. For me, success is not just about financial or career success, but about leading a *fully engaged life* in which all of your gifts and talents are developed and put to their highest use.

We've all heard that you can't know where you're going if you don't know where you've been. I would add if you don't know where you are today you may drift into an unsatisfying, unsuccessful future. The unsatisfying part is the key here. How many people do you know – perhaps yourself included—who feel like they're in a job or relationship that may not be going anywhere? They are anxious or maybe even apathetic, feeling they are not accomplishing anything for themselves or for others. This scenario is especially sad if the person had higher hopes and expectations for him or

herself at an earlier time. There are also too many people who meet the expectations they originally set out to meet but then feel empty and depressed. Maybe the plan accounted for making a certain salary or getting a certain title, but true happiness that comes from leading a meaningful and authentic life was not accounted for in that picture.

People want more from life. They want to be fully engaged. They don't want a life where they feel like they're running in place and not progressing. No kid dreams of it, no adult starts the day with that objective. It just happens. It's like seashells very gradually turning into sand from the pressure of the ocean and the wind. It happens so slowly you don't see it coming. You may want to go down a certain path but you take a little detour and then another little detour and before you know it you don't know how to go back or to how to progress.

It's not too late to get back on track, or to start on the right track. That's the good news. There is no bad news, except that it will take a little—well, a lot of—soul searching. But the other good news is that it's a journey you'll enjoy. How do I know this? Because it's all about you and what you enjoy doing. Sometimes parents are surprised to see their teenager, who never likes to read, finish *Teens Can Make It Happen* or *Move Without the Ball* cover to cover – even foregoing some usual TV, phone, or gaming time. The books aren't filled with the latest gossip about their favorite sports, or movie stars. They're not about anything illicit that may be appealing for a rebellious teen. They're not even light reading. Teens are just like adults – they're interested in a subject if that subject is themselves, and that's what those books are about.

Gaining self-awareness—and then doing something about it—is not a task everyone is willing to take on. Many people are content with things the way they are. People may desire greater success but they don't want to put out the effort to improve themselves. One possible reason is that they don't even realize they have the power to do something about it if they wanted to. If you don't have the awareness that there is a problem, or you don't think you have the ability to change your circumstances, you will stay where you are.

A big stumbling block I see among people of all ages when I talk about knowing yourself is fear. Fear is a very powerful motivator to do or not to do something. People may fear exploring their past or examining their weaknesses. They may not want to be reminded of painful experiences or made to feel that they lack value. Many people are also afraid of success itself and how that might change their lives. They get so comfortable with the status quo, any uncertainty—good or bad—can seem threatening. There are many who sabotage their own success because inside they don't feel they deserve it. The only way to make sure you create rather than destroy the path to success in your life is to respect yourself and your goals for the future.

The fear of knowing is common and natural. Motivational psychologist Abraham Maslow, father of the theory of self-actualization, said we fear the truth at the same time we seek it. "For instance, certain truths carry automatic responsibilities which may be anxiety-producing. One way to evade the responsibility and the anxiety is simply to evade consciousness of the truth." The good news is that by the act of looking inward to seek our true selves, we are taking responsibility *and* moving toward self-actualization.

The Success Process: Building Internal Capacity for Greatness

What is your ultimate aim in reading this book? What will you do in your life to feel successful? What will you stand for that others will admire about you? You're probably beginning to realize that we have to work as a team here. I can provide the questions or spark some from you, but you're the one providing the answers. What I can also offer you is a process to align yourself with the resources to make your vision of success a reality. You're responsible for *planning to succeed* which takes place naturally as you commit to this process every day.

The Nine Step curriculum that I share with people is a systematic approach to organizing and advancing your life goals and aspirations. It's the "*how*." It increases your focus, organization, and time management skills and helps improve relationships.

It helps you change how you think about yourself and your possibilities. It encourages you to recognize and analyze attitudes and behaviors that stand in the way of success. It shows you how to appreciate and invest in yourself, for example, by valuing educational, health, and career-preparation opportunities, keys to achieving individual excellence. It provides tools for managing stress and stresses the long-term consequences of individual behavior.

Here's a brief summary of the Nine Steps, along with some questions and suggestions to help you work through each one:

Step 1: Check Your ID

Before you decide what you want for your life, you first must understand who you are, what the influences are on your life, and why you think and act the way you do. Self-awareness is where success begins. It is difficult to understand the world and how you respond to it until you first know yourself. What are your strengths? What moves you forward? What are your weaknesses? What holds you back? What are your patterns of behavior? What are your passions? Sometimes the biggest obstacles to success are those that we unconsciously put in our own paths. Past hurts, business or career downfalls and negative attitudes hold you back. Learn from the bad experiences and failures and let them go. What are people's lives like when they don't know who they are?

Step 2: Create Your Vision

Your vision is your life's destination. It is realizing and exploring your dreams and aspirations. Leadership is weakened by a lack of vision. Your vision can determine your greatness. Vision keeps you focused, helps minimize distractions. A well-defined vision enables you to set meaningful goals for your business or personal life. How do you envision your future? Describe the short- and long-term vision that you have for your life personally and professionally.

Step 3: Develop Your Travel Plan

Prepare for the future. If you are to fulfill your vision for a better life, you must create a plan of action. When you begin to work toward your goals through a plan of action, you assert power over your life. You know who you are, where you're going, and how you're going to get there. Planning save time, keeps you focused, and builds confidence. Your personal Travel Plan should consider family, community, and friends. Your professional Travel Plan should consider client relationships, co-worker/employee/boss, and business growth.

Step 4: Master the Rules of the Road

You need guidelines to keep you on track in pursuit of a better life. The rules are constant and enduring; they do not change. Characteristics to guide your life:

- Honesty
- hard work
- Determination
- Positive attitude

Step 5: Step into the Outer Limits

To grow, you have to leave your comfort zone, confront fears and take risks. Fear of the unknown is one of the greatest obstacles that you will face when you're traveling the journey of the Success Process. To be successful, you must learn to overcome that natural fear and step outside what has become comfortable and familiar. Key points to remember:

- Risk is a natural part of life
- Staying the same is standing still
- Change (growth) means risk

Step 6: Pilot the Seasons of Change

If you keep doing what you have always done you get the same results. Learn how to create change and manage your response. Dealing with changing circumstances is important, but creating and managing your response to change in your life is probably

an even greater part of the Success Process. Challenges happen when the pace of change exceeds our ability to change, and events move faster than our understanding. But with change come opportunity and growth.

Step 7: Build Your Dream Team

No one makes it alone. Build supportive relationships that will help you work toward your goals. Learn to trust and be trustworthy. You'll need the help and encouragement of others. With a great team helping you, you can do more than you ever could do alone. Include people who **care** about you and believe in your goals. Trust is critical to building a strong support team. Credibility comes with a pattern of behavior. Trust is not easily earned; real trust is established over time

Step 8: Win By a Decision

What you are in this world is largely the result of the decisions you have made so far in your life. The choices that you make will be one of your greatest challenges. How can you tell the difference between a good and a bad decision? Good decisions have desirable consequences; they help you to grow and reach your goals; bad decisions have undesirable consequences. Continue to maximize your decision making ability by considering:

- Political impact
- Marketplace impact
- Personal impact
- Trends – and what they show you.

Step 9: Commit to Your Vision

Devote your time and energy on a consistent basis to pursue your goals and vision. Enthusiasm and commitment generate excellence, and that leads to success. A commitment is something you live and something you renew and fulfill every day. It is *doing* rather than *saying*.

You Have to Start

Though each step of the Nine Steps to Success is important, the first is the key to making the following eight work for you. In *You Can Make It Happen* and *Teens Can Make It Happen*, I call this step “Check Your ID.” In this book, I will call the first step “Who are you?” because that is the crux of Check Your ID.

As I’ve written, you can’t understand the world and how you respond to it until you first know yourself. And you can’t change the things you don’t like about yourself until you search out the things that influence you and motivate you and hurt you. *You can only start to maximize your potential once you know exactly who you are, and what is important to you.* Sometimes the biggest obstacles to success are those that we unconsciously put in our own paths. Past hurts and negative attitudes hold you back. Bring the good things from your past forward. Learn from the bad things and let them go.

As You Begin...

I have summarized below some of the key points I propose and want to emphasize as you work through this book:

- To know yourself is the first and most important step in the Success Process.
- Self-understanding is a lifelong pursuit.
- Once you have a sense of who you are, you can then begin to *envision* who you want to become.
- Each of us can control our lives by controlling the way that we think.
- Replace negative messages with more positive ones.
- Consider your personality, your talents and gifts so you can give your all to everything you do.
- Move toward positions that naturally fit your strengths and passions.
- Work to connect with people you like and respect and who, in turn, like and respect you.

- Believe in the *possibilities* for your life.

Once you know how to start your engine and what fuels it, you can determine a direction for your life, but you won't go anywhere without the first step, "Who are you?" My challenge to you is to become personally accountable for your success by making education and information relevant to your world. I will show you how to access resources and think differently about them—and, consequently, you'll begin to think differently about yourself. You'll see yourself as the star you are. Everybody wants to be a winner. This difference is in knowing *how*.

Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines.

Chapter One

Things do not happen; things are made to happen.

—John F. Kennedy

The World We Live In

The world is a collection of unlimited wealth and resources. Often, we limit our potential by moving in our own small circles because of our fears. If we change the way we view the world, there is nothing we cannot accomplish.

I think the greatest opportunity to achieve in your life is to have a sense of who you are. What does “Who you are” mean? To me, it means being comfortable with yourself and your surroundings. It’s connecting to what is real for you. It’s being able to feel your authenticity. It’s looking past labels. It’s having clarity about your life and your possibilities. It’s viewing your life from a higher point than where you are now. It’s being able to establish a personal and professional performance program to build, leverage and position yourself in your chosen area of influence. It’s wanting and being able to perform at or near your potential.

Your success is based on your commitment to discovery. First, discovering who you are, second, discovering how to apply this knowledge to the world you live in, and third, making the discovery process part of your daily routine to sustain success over a lifetime. The challenge is the ability to co-exist and grow with the world as it changes, rather than collide with it or get swallowed up in it.

It took me a long time to understand that the world we live in is defined by so many external things. We are constantly programmed—programmed by our family, school, our job, our friends, messages we get the media. With so many programs coming at me all the time, I have to step back and ask myself at this time what has been *my* program? What messages have I been listening to about what I should do, what I should want, where I should live, what kind of car I should drive? Even what my daily routine should be. These messages I’ve been listening to and following might be very different from what I really need and want.

When we choose what to do in life based on the influence of others, including our parents, teachers, friends, spouses, leaders, ministers, the media and so on, do we end up pursuing jobs or careers that might not be what we really want? We can be highly educated, but are we whole? We can feel like we are connected, but are we truly connected? Can we relate to the world we live in?

Traditional education, first at school and then in the workplace, teaches us to execute effectively. Unfortunately, it never gets us to dig deep or discover how we can integrate our uniqueness into the fabric of what we should be doing. This can hinder our passions for far-reaching accomplishments and dampen our determination and perseverance for achieving the most that we can be. That is why it has been said that we only accomplish 10 percent of our potential.

I know of no greater feeling than having clarity of purpose in life so that I can focus my energy and resources on my goals and visions. Taking a proactive approach to creating opportunities rather than waiting for things to happen can help save us many years of wasted time. It has a positive domino effect. We're rewarded at many levels when we have clarity because we can more easily align the resources available to us for continued progress. This progress builds momentum and creates more opportunities.

During my journey through life, I've learned there are many important things that people have in common, no matter what city, state, country, or continent they are from. People want leadership. They want to follow a model—a person who knows where to go and how to get there. People also want to be valued. They want their achievements recognized. They want to feel good about themselves. People desire to be better. They want to know how they can build even more value for themselves in the future. I've also learned that not much is accomplished when you focus on people's shortcomings. I've found it more valuable to focus on opportunities rather than on problems and weaknesses. One of the great secrets to a good life is to know what we want to get out of it. Our ability to build a life based on our strengths, our talents, and our genius, I feel, is the gift we're all looking for.

My challenge to you is to become personally accountable for your success by making education and information relevant to your world. I hope this book will give you

some idea how to access resources and think differently about them—and consequently you'll begin to think differently about yourself. You'll see yourself as the “star you are”. Everyone wants to be a winner. The difference is in knowing *how*.

The Routine of Life

A lot of us—I would even say most of us—live in a routine. We have a predictable pattern of what we do every day. When I speak to groups, I may ask them what their daily routines are. Not to my surprise, they tell me basically the same thing no matter where I'm speaking. Early in the morning we get up, shower, brush our teeth, maybe grab a quick breakfast, get the kids off to school. Then we drive or take a train or bus to work, spend eight or more hours at the job doing the same types of things every day. Then we get the kids, go home, eat dinner, watch TV, go to bed. Then I ask what do you do on Tuesday? Same thing. Wednesday? Same thing. Thursday? Same thing. Friday? Maybe you go out. Saturday you try to sleep in a little and then do chores like grocery shopping or mowing the lawn. Maybe you go out. On Sunday, go to church, have dinner with the family, get ready for Monday. How long can we maintain that routine? Some people may say for 30 years, or even all our lives.

Most of our time *is* spent doing mundane tasks: sleeping, eating, driving, dressing, bathing and grooming, checking and replying to e-mails, paying bills, watching TV, trying to organize paperwork, making sure the kids get to the bus on time. Even celebrities whom we imagine to lead glamorous and exciting lives 24/7 have a lot of normalcy in their lives. Humans across cultures, across the globe, play out these same routines every day.

When we look back after 30 years, we find that we have no more in the end than we had in the beginning. That's because we can't keep doing the same thing and expecting different results. We stunt our personal and professional growth if we don't strive to do and to be something better tomorrow than yesterday and today.

There's nothing wrong with the concept of a routine. Just like a habit, it can be a good one or one you'd like to break yourself from. When you're focusing on a routine it

should be *thoughtfully based on what you want to accomplish*. As author Henry David Thoreau put it, “It is not enough to be busy. The question is, what are we busy about?” Good routines are not automatic because in doing them you’re more aware of *what* you’re doing and *why*. More than that, the key to making routines work for you is to improve upon them every day.

Care

The word “care” is very important in our lives because without care, we disconnect. We are just going through the motions. As I read the news, travel and speak to people, I realize that lack of care is a huge problem in society. People are not doing a very good job taking care of themselves or taking care of others. Think about it, isn’t that the source of all types of problems today? You first have to learn to care for yourself before you can care for others.

As individuals, we may not eat right, get enough sleep, exercise, or reach out for the support or affection we need. If you care about yourself –look out for yourself, show concern and liking toward yourself – you will be ahead in life and weather its rough storms.

Lack of care can become a dark spiral path that leads to serious family and societal problems. What happens when we don’t care about our job? It shows in our work. People say things used to be made with more care, and in many cases that is true. In our fast-paced bottom-line-focused world we often sacrifice quality. There may also be multiple people involved at different stages of a project or product’s development so no one individual feels the responsibility or pride he would have felt if he had control or at least contribution over the big picture. Lack of care also shows in how we relate to our co-workers or customers. What if you are a teacher and you don’t care about your job? Think about the effect that could have on the students in your classroom. What if you don’t care about your neighbors or community as a whole? They suffer. You ultimately suffer, too.

When I was doing a 10-city tour for *Teens Can Make It Happen*, I spoke with corporate and community leaders and also visited schools at each stop. At one particular school in Denver, as I got out of the car I saw there was trash all over the school yard. A tennis court for the students was terribly run down. The surface was all cracked and covered with debris, weeds, and overgrown bushes. As I walked up to the school, I noticed that a couple of the windows were cracked. The building was dingy and badly needed a paint job. It was actually a great-looking building—the architecture was fabulous—but it needed a lot of work. I wondered how in the world the students could care about themselves or their education as they walk into this environment every single day. How can they be expected to care when the people running the school don't seem to care?

I went into vision mode. What would it take to make this environment better? I said to myself, we know the public education system doesn't have a lot of money to work with given all of their needs, but how much does it cost to pick up the garbage around the school? To cut the grass? It wouldn't cost that much to get the building painted—they could even take up a collection to do it. Obviously, nobody cares. That's precisely the message that these kids get every single day when they take the walk that I just took to get into their classroom. It's the shortest but the longest journey in their lives. When I spoke to the students, my intuition was confirmed. The students were lifeless; the neglect and lack of care was evident in their hollow expressions.

We each have a daily decision to make about how we care for ourselves and for others in our community. When we put out the effort—even a small effort—to care, we start to feel good about our community, our relationships, and ourselves.

The Power of Relevancy

One of the reasons our school systems are not up to par is that we miss the connection between young people and their personal career and development. It doesn't make sense but the education system – what can be the greatest influence on

our lives for positive change, no matter our circumstances—is one of the many institutions that actually discourage us from thinking.

Much of what I believe is wrong with the state of education today in the U.S., where more money is spent per pupil than in almost any other nation, is that it's driven by the labels of grades. When grades are of primary importance, versus relevant learning, the natural result is that teachers begin to teach to tests and students memorize, spit back the information on an exam or essay, and then quickly forget it. The culture of cheating that has been sweeping across America at all social and economic levels is just a symptom of this type of education. What's important to the student is not necessarily of any importance to the teacher or school, so the student quickly learns that his or her thoughts or opinions don't carry much weight. Why try to think?

The same goes for the work environment. Is the person talking about changing the status quo admired or promoted? No. On the contrary, he or she is seen as threatening or wanting to create more work and problems. Punch in, do what you are told to do, break for lunch, come back and do the same thing for four or five more hours. No thinking required.

When free thinking is discouraged, freedom is discouraged. In order to get in touch with who we really are subsequently be the best we can be, we need to think in terms of how the information and resources we have access to can directly propel our success. Not everything will be relevant but some of it will be. If we want to rise above mediocrity and create a successful, satisfying life, we need to be proactive in seeking information and resources; not waiting for it to come to us as it does in school.

To get a feel for what I'm talking about, flip through the newspaper or a magazine today and make a conscious effort to pull out three things—information, advice, or ideas—that you might be able to benefit from in your personal or professional life. Here's an example: from the financial section you learn about a retail company that is making unusual gains in the market. Do you want to research more about the company to see if you might want to apply for a job or consider purchasing stock or a franchise? If you have your own business, what tips would you like to evaluate and possibly use yourself? What is their management structure like? What has made their marketing

campaign successful? Does the company sell a product or service that fills a need you have? If you're involved with a charity or community organization, could you solicit this company to sponsor or host a future event? Might they donate products for an auction or directly to your program beneficiaries? Maybe they would be willing to support your local school by purchasing ad space or offering coupons in a publication. When you start to think about making information relevant to your life and the lives of those around you, you can see how it can lead to endless opportunities.

Build On Your Strengths

By committing to thinking and self-learning, we have a way to continue absorbing knowledge and making it relevant to our lives. You know that you aren't as likely to pursue learning and you're a lot less likely to retain information if it's not relevant to your life. There are trivia buffs and news junkies among us (myself included) who retain lots of seemingly useless knowledge, but in reality it relates to an interest or need we have. Once we are aware of our interests and needs, we will naturally gravitate toward activities and information that satisfies them.

Students of all ages tend to give the most attention to subjects that are of interest to them and that they see themselves making achievements in. If you feel like you have some ability at playing the piano, you are more likely to want to continue lessons. If you feel you have absolutely no musical ability, you probably feel it would be a waste of time to take lessons.

For younger students, still exploring different fields, developing and testing their skills at reading and writing for example, competence should be attained in all areas. As students enter high school, those who are excelling in a particular area such as math should continue and pursue excellence. Though intelligent people often perform well in multiple areas, this does not hold true across the board. You could be brilliant in science but horrible at English, for example. You could probably list your strengths and weaknesses back in elementary and high school, no matter how long ago you attended. This is something we all remember because we remember how good success felt and

how terrible failure felt. In my seminars, I teach students that failure is necessary for growth and all people who are successful fail sometimes. That's how we often learn best. If you've ever participated in a spelling bee, I'll bet you will always remember how to spell the word that disqualified you. That's a very simple example of how we can learn from our failures, but there are many more complex ways. If you ever tried to start your own business you know there are always hardships, so many things you didn't predict, couldn't control, or could have done better. It's easy to lose perspective and think the world will end because you made a bad decision, or didn't get accepted to a certain school, or for a certain job. The solution is always the same: you must face your fear of failure to move ahead.

How do we have the courage to keep moving despite discouragements and distractions? To start, we must believe in ourselves and our unique abilities.